

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 260 310

CG 018 403

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TITLE Influence Strategies in Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Friendships.  
PUB DATE Mar 85  
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association (Boston, MA, March 21-24, 1985).  
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Change Strategies; \*Friendship; Higher Education; \*Individual Power; Influences; \*Sex Differences; Undergraduate Students  
IDENTIFIERS \*Intimacy

## ABSTRACT

Some writers have suggested that males and females differ not only in influencibility, but also in the strategies which they use to influence others. Although general sex differences in friendships may affect influence strategies, there is little research comparing males' and females' friendships. To explore differences between same- and opposite-sex friendships, 60 male and 60 female undergraduates were asked to think of a close friend of either the same or the opposite sex, and then complete a questionnaire regarding this friendship. The questionnaire consisted of background questions, a rank-ordering of activities they did with their friend, a version of Rubin's Liking and Loving Scale, and questions about the intimacy of the friendship. Subjects also responded to questions concerning strategies they use to influence their friend. The results indicated that males and females perceived friendship differently. Women reported feeling more intimate with female friends than men reported feeling with male friends. Women viewed same-sex friendships as closer than opposite-sex friendships, but men did not. The influence strategies and power bases reported in these friendships differed from those found in research on marriage and dating in that sex stereotypic patterns of influence were not evident. All of the commonly reported influence strategies were direct rather than indirect. (NRB)

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# Influence Strategies in Same-sex and Opposite-sex Friendships

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## Sex Differences in Influence Strategies

Sex differences in influence have been the subject of much research in recent years. Eagly (1983) has discussed differences in influencibility, arguing that small differences found in laboratory studies in which women are more easily influenced than men are a product of the higher status accorded men in natural social structures. Men have greater influence in groups because they have greater legitimate authority. Other writers have suggested that males and females differ not only in influencibility, but also in the strategies which they use to influence others.

Johnson (1976) pointed out that indirect influence strategies are used by people who lack power. Women may use indirect strategies, whereas men may use direct strategies. Describing various schemes to classify influence strategies, Johnson said that women are more likely to use personal and helpless tactics, indirect reward and coercion, and referent power. Men are more likely to use concrete tactics, their competence, direct reward and coercion, and expert, legitimate, and informational power. Johnson also suggested that men have more flexibility regarding the strategies which they may use, in that men are "allowed" to use indirect strategies, but women are not "allowed" to use direct strategies.

Kelley et al. (1978) found that people's sex stereotypes about the influence strategies used in relationship conflict were similar to actual behavior. Women cried, sulked, criticized their partner's lack of consideration for feelings and insensitivity to their effect; men showed anger, rejected their partners' tears, asked for a logical and less emotional approach, and gave reasons for delaying discussions. The authors interpret the behavior in terms of conflict-avoidant

males and conflict-confronting females.

Other researchers have discussed influence strategies in particular settings. For example, in simulated organizations, females who were role playing supervisors made fewer influence attempts, used a more limited range of strategies, used fewer rewarding strategies (e.g., promising pay increases), and used more coercive strategies (e.g., threats of pay deductions) than males playing supervisors. The females also had lower self-confidence, which the authors felt explained differences in the strategies used (Instone, Major, & Bunker, 1983).

Strategies used in heterosexual relationships, particularly marriage, have been the most frequently studied sex differences in influence tactics. Using French and Raven's (1962) bases of power, Raven, Centers, and Rodrigues (1975) argued that husbands and wives use different kinds of power tactics. Women rely more on referent power than men, whereas men rely more on expertise than women do. Kahn (1984) has argued that, in relationships, men possess more of each power base than women. (See Huston, 1983, for a discussion of this literature.)

Other writers assessed the bases of power used in specific types of marriages. For example, Frieze (1979) indicated that, in battering marriages, husbands use coercive power, and wives use referent, informational, and manipulative power. Cate, Koval, and Ponzette (1983) analyzed rather different marriages, those of dual-career couples. They found that dual career couples use more direct strategies than traditional couples in which the wife doesn't work outside the home. They did not find sex differences among either dual-career or traditional couples, however.

A few researchers have discussed influence strategies used in heterosexual dating relationships, proposing that patterns found in marriages are likely to emerge at earlier stages in relationships, as well. Falbo and Peplau (1980) asked respondents to write an essay describing "How I get my way with" a romantic partner. Half of the subjects described their heterosexual relationships and half described their

homosexual relationships. After factor analyzing coded strategies, the authors identified two important dimensions by which strategies could be categorized, direct vs. indirect and unilateral vs. bilateral. Falbo and Peplau found that women in heterosexual relationships were more likely to use indirect and unilateral strategies than any other group. Lesbian women and heterosexual and gay men used direct and bilateral strategies. Thus, sex differences emerged only in heterosexual relationships. Falbo and Peplau argued that heterosexual romances tend to elicit stereotypic sex roles, particularly regarding influence strategies.

Falbo (1977) found that sex role, rather than gender, predicted influence strategies. Feminine people used tears, emotional alteration, and subtlety more than masculine or androgynous people. Masculine and androgynous people were more likely to use assertion than were feminine people. Bradbury and Solano (1983) presented similar conclusions in a study in which they asked respondents to indicate which of 26 influence strategies they used in a current or recent dating relationship. Androgynous respondents were more likely to use reasoning, talking about what they want, and telling the partner they have experience concerning the matter than those with undifferentiated sex roles. They used reasoning more than feminine respondents and talking about what they want more than masculine respondents. Masculine subjects used telling, reasoning, and assertion more than other groups.

If heterosexual romantic relationships elicit traditional sex roles, what occurs in nonromantic opposite-sex friendships? Does interacting with the opposite sex encourage the use of stereotypic influence strategies, or do features of romantic relationships cause such differences? There is very little research regarding either same-sex or opposite-sex friendships at all and virtually none regarding influence strategies used in any friendships.

Cowan (1981) did look at the strategies used by children and adolescents with their parents and their best friends, who were presumably of the same sex. She found that females used more strategies than males, that both sexes used more

strategies with their mothers than with their fathers or friends, that friends were the targets of fewer unilateral and indirect strategies than were parents, and that they used stronger strategies with friends and weaker strategies with parents.

She did not find that females used more unilateral and indirect strategies than males. Females did use more positive affect, but they did not use more negative affect than males. Among the oldest group, twelfth graders, women used more bilateral strategies with their friends than men did and men used more manipulation and negative strategies than women did. Cowan suggested that people learn to vary strategies in different kinds of relationships. The more equality in a relationship, the more direct and bilateral are the strategies which are used.

If romantic heterosexual relationships elicit traditional sex roles, then one might expect friendships to produce different results. Friendships require less modeling of parental roles and involve fewer expectations derived from conceptions of marital roles. They may also be more equal than romantic relationships (Davis & Todd, 1982). Hence, the present study investigated friendships. To draw comparisons with romantic relationships, both opposite-sex and same-sex friendships were studied. Influence research suggests that mixed-sex and same-sex pairs behave differently. Laboratory studies of influence attempts between strangers also sometimes show that sex of the influence target, rather than sex of the influencer, accounts for differences. For instance, in social learning research, men and women did not behave differently in response to reinforcement of influence attempts with same-sex partners, although sex differences did occur in research with opposite-sex partners (Weiss, Weiss, Wenninger, & Balling, 1981).

#### Sex Differences in Friendships

General sex differences in friendships may affect influence strategies, but there is surprisingly little

research comparing males' and females' friendships. Wright (1982) pointed out that stereotypes concerning men and women's same-sex friendships include two elements, that women discuss more intimate matters than men and that women's friendships are less permanent than men's and therefore are inferior. Examining males' and females' perceptions of their friendships, Wright concluded that there are some differences in the first six months of friendships, but these differences are very small and are consistent with sex role socialization. Strong, long-term friendships do not differ between men and women. Wright indicated that men had greater difficulty disclosing intimate concerns early in friendships, but that intimate self-disclosure eventually brought male friends closer together, just as it does for women. He also suggested that women's perceptions of their friends appear more global. That is, women tend to regard their good friends as "good" in all aspects of friendship. Men, on the other hand, compartmentalize their friends, tending to regard a friend as good in some areas but not necessarily in others. Thus, Wright concluded that men and women's same-sex friendships differ as they develop, but that there are more similarities between the sexes than there are differences in longer-term relationships.

Caldwell and Peplau (1982) used self-reports and role playing to analyze men's and women's same-sex friendships. They found that the number of friends, time spent together, and value placed on intimate friendships did not differ for the sexes. Male's and female's interactions did differ, however. Women spent more time in emotional sharing and talking, whereas men spent more time doing activities together. In role playing women expressed more feelings, were more supportive, and talked more about friends and family than men. Caldwell and Peplau suggested that their findings are consistent with the conclusion that women's friendships are more intimate than men's friendships.

Men's and women's perceptions of opposite-sex, nonromantic friendships have not been studied systematically. If men and women derive expectations about friendships based

on their experiences in same-sex friendships, they may perceive opposite-sex friendships rather differently. Perhaps women expect greater intimacy than men expect and therefore would consider a friendship less close than a man might consider it. If people derive expectations about friendships from experiences in romantic relationships, they may also have different perceptions. For example, they may expect less equality in opposite-sex friendships than in same-sex friendships. One of the purposes of the present study was to explore differences between same- and opposite-sex friendships, but the lack of previous research precludes formal hypotheses concerning those differences.

### Hypotheses

From the literature reviewed above, the following hypotheses were developed:

1. Women use more indirect and unilateral influence strategies than men in opposite-sex friendships.
2. Women use more direct and bilateral influence strategies in same-sex friendships than in opposite-sex friendships.
3. Women describe their friendships with women as more intimate than men describe their friendships with men.

### Method

#### Respondents

The subjects were 60 males and 60 females enrolled in freshman level Introductory and Developmental Psychology courses. They completed the questionnaire during their regular class and were given extra credit towards their grades.

The mean age of respondents was 19.33. Sixty-one percent of respondents were freshmen, 21 percent were sophomores, 8 percent were juniors, and 10 percent were



seniors

### Materials And Procedure

Each subject was asked to think of a close friend of either the same sex or the opposite sex. The entire questionnaire was completed regarding this particular friendship. Thus, there were four conditions generated, females and males describing a same-sex friendship and females and males describing an opposite-sex friendship.

The survey consisted of background information on both the subject and the friend they chose to describe, followed by a variety of scales. A list of activities had been presented to a pretest group and those activities which were common among friends in this population were presented in this survey. Subjects rank ordered the 5 activities they do with their friends most often. The second scale was the 18-item version of Rubin's (1973) Liking and Loving Scale. Then subjects answered questions about the intimacy of the friendship, responding on 8-point scales. These questions were.

1. How intimate are the feelings and thoughts that you share with this person, compared to other friendships that you have?
2. How frequently do you discuss personal matters with this friend?
3. How intimate are the thoughts and feelings that this friend shares with you?
4. How frequently do you discuss things about yourself with this friend that you would not discuss with anyone else?
5. How frequently does your friend reveal things to you that you think she/he wouldn't reveal to any one else?
6. How frequently do you have conversations with this friend that you would not discuss with or recount to anyone else?
7. How comfortable would you feel sitting in silence with this friend for a rather long period of time?

Following this, subjects wrote a short paragraph describing "How I get my way with [my friend]," (Falbo & Peplau, 1980). Then respondents rated "how likely" they were to use each of French and Raven's (1962) bases of power with their friend. Each base of power was described in one sentence. Finally they answered direct questions asking "how easily would you say that you can influence this friend, how easily would you say that this friend can influence you, and what would you say is the balance of power in your relationship with this friend?"

### Results

#### Coding of Questionnaires

Liking and loving scores were derived by summing responses to the nine items in each of Rubin's (1973) scales. An intimacy score was created by totalling the seven questions about intimacy. Direct questions about influence were each coded separately. Frequency of respondents who checked that they used each base of power was calculated. And the frequency of each reported activities of the friends was calculated by multiplying the mean rank for each item by the number of people who included it among their top five choices. Essays were coded using Falbo and Peplau's (1980) categorization, which is further described below.

#### Differences in Qualities of Friendships

Perceptions of same-sex friendships differed in several ways from perceptions of opposite-sex friendships. Two-by-two analyses of variance by sex of respondent and friendship type revealed significant main effects for friendship type: Respondents describing same-sex friends said that their friends were younger (same-sex  $M=19.19$  years, opposite-sex,  $M=20.25$ ;  $F(1,116)=5.89$ ,  $p<.05$ ), that they spent more time together (same-sex,  $M=142.71$  hours/month, opposite-sex,  $M=50.91$  hours/month;  $F(1,116)=17.60$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and that they had been friends longer (same-sex,  $M=71.05$  months; opposite-sex,

$M=36.68$  months,  $F(1,116)=5.89$ ,  $p(<.05)$ , and felt more intimate (same-sex,  $M=45.86$ , opposite-sex,  $M=38.59$ ;  $F(1,116)=18.59$ ,  $p(<.001)$  and more loving (same-sex,  $M=52.65$ ; opposite-sex,  $M=47.54$ ;  $F(1,116)=7.16$ ,  $p(<.01)$ , than those describing opposite-sex friendships said they were.

There were no significant main effects for sex, but there were significant interactions between sex and friendship type on several variables. Regarding length of friendship, there was no difference in friendship type among men (same-sex,  $M=59.80$  months, opposite-sex,  $M=41.67$  months), but women said they had known same-sex friends ( $M=82.30$  months) longer than they had known opposite-sex friends ( $M=31.70$  months,  $F(1,116)=6.83$ ,  $p(<.05)$ . Patterns for intimacy and loving were similar: Men reported no significant differences in intimacy (same-sex,  $M=43.20$ ; opposite-sex,  $M=39.97$ ) and loving (same-sex,  $M=49.30$ ; opposite-sex,  $M=47.90$ ) of same- and opposite-sex friends, whereas women reported that they felt more intimate (same-sex,  $M=48.53$ ; opposite-sex,  $M=37.20$ ;  $F(1,116)=5.75$ ,  $p(<.05)$  and loving (same-sex,  $M=56.00$ ; opposite-sex,  $M=47.17$ ;  $F(1,116)=4.74$ ,  $p(<.05)$  towards same-sex friends than they felt towards opposite-sex friends. There were no significant main or interaction effects for liking, however.

Respondents had noted the five activities they most frequently did with their friends, in rank order. The frequency for each activity was calculated by multiplying the mean ranking of the activity by the percentage of respondents who chose it. The most frequent activities done with friends were, in rank order, talking, going to parties, watching television, going out for informal meals (e.g., for pizza), for car rides, to bars, to movies, and for walks.

There were sex differences in reported activities when the eight most common activities were analyzed. Women were more likely to report going out for informal meals, walks, and parties, and just talking or watching television than men reported, men were more likely to report going to movies and bars, and for rides in cars than women ( $\chi^2(15)=34.33$ ,  $p(<.001)$ ).

There were also differences among same- and opposite-sex friendships. Same-sex friends were more likely to go to bars than opposite-sex friends; opposite-sex friends were more likely to go to movies, for walks, to parties, just talking, to watch television, and to go for car rides ( $\chi^2(15)=19.58$ ,  $p(.01)$ ).

### Influence Strategies

There were no differences in responses to direct questions about amount of influence between either the sexes or friendship types. That is, the groups did not differ in their perceptions of their own reported influence, their friend's influence, or of the balance of power in the friendship.

Bases of power. The reported bases of power used did not differ by friendship type. They did differ by sex, in that women reported using coercion, expertise, and authority more; men reported using information more ( $\chi^2(13)=49.72$ ,  $p(.001)$ ). The sexes reported using reward and referent power equally. Men were also more likely to report using no power bases more often than women did.

Influence strategies. Influence strategies were coded using the classification systems developed by Falbo and Peplau (1980). The second and third authors coded each essay. When they disagreed, the first author also coded the essay. Inter-rater agreement at first coding occurred with 94 percent of the essays.

Over all respondents, the frequency with which influence strategies were used was: Persuasion (32%), stating importance (8%), asking (8%), bargaining (8%), reasoning (5%), telling (4%), persistence (4%), laissez-faire (2%), negative affect (2%) and suggesting (2%). No one reported using withdrawal or positive affect, 5 percent used other strategies, 11 percent gave inappropriate responses, and 7 percent wrote no essay.

There were differences among men and women in reported influence strategies: Men said they used asking, persuasion,

talking and telling more than women; women said they used bargaining, laissez-faire, stating importance, and other strategies more than men; men and women said they used negative affect, persistence, reasoning, and suggesting equally ( $\chi^2(27)=34.72$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

When only the commonly used strategies were assessed, that is, strategies which at least 10 percent of respondents in one group reported using, there were both sex and friendship differences. Women used stating importance (13.5% vs. 3%) and bargaining (13% vs. 1%) more; men used persuasion (28% vs. 36.5%) more. Men were also more likely to refuse to answer the question (10% vs. 3.5%;  $\chi^2(9)=19.42$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Same-sex friends use bargaining (13% vs. 1.3%) more; opposite-sex friends use persuasion (28% vs. 36.5%) and stating importance (6.5% vs. 10%) more ( $\chi^2(7)=10.77$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Finally, the dimensions of direct vs. indirect strategies and bilateral vs. unilateral influence strategies were assessed. Falbo and Peplau (1980) classified directness and laterality in this way: Direct, bilateral strategies included bargaining, reasoning, persistence, and talking; direct, unilateral strategies included asking, stating importance, and telling; indirect, bilateral strategies were positive affect and hinting; and indirect unilateral strategies were negative affect, withdrawal, and laissez-faire, persuasion was considered bilateral, but neither direct nor indirect.

There were no differences in the directness of strategies reported by either sex or friendship type because all of the most commonly used strategies in every group were direct. There were not significant differences in laterality either 75 percent of men used unilateral strategies, whereas 60 percent of women used unilateral strategies; and 80 percent of opposite-sex friends used unilateral strategies, whereas 50 percent of same-sex friends used unilateral strategies. The trend is in the expected pattern for both sex and friendship type, but was not strong enough to be significant ( $\chi^2(3)=2.10$ ,  $p=.15$ ).

## Discussion

### Same-sex and Opposite-sex Friendships

Women describing women friends felt closer to their friends than did women describing male friends. They felt more intimate and loving, they spent more time together, and they had known each other longer. Although men spent more time with male friends than with female friends, they did not feel more intimate or loving with male friends than with female friends, nor had they known them longer. Thus, although men's and women's impressions of their friendships did not differ when reports are collapsed across both same- and opposite-sex friendships, males and females do seem to perceive friendships differently. This supports Wright's (1982) conclusion that long-term friendships of men and women differ less than stereotypes suggest.

However, the phenomenon is more complex than other investigators have implied. Women perceive same- and opposite-sex friendships very differently. Perhaps women are more sensitive to distinctive characteristics of relationships than men are. Gilligan (1982) has argued that women are more concerned with the effects of decisions on relationships and are more attuned to how actions affect interactions among people.

Perhaps the sexes expect different things from different types of friendships. Banikotes, Neimayer, and Lepkowsky (1981) reported that females described fewer differences between ideal male and female friends than males describe. Men seem to want male friends to have similar cognitive constructs, but do not value such similarity in female friends. Women want similarity in both.

Or perhaps the presence of a man in a relationship reduces its intimacy by reducing the level of mutual self-disclosure. These women did report "just talking" more than men did. Caldwell and Peplau's (1982) finding that women spend more time sharing intimacies with each other than men do and research implying that men have difficulty with self-disclosure (e.g., Kahn, 1984) are consistent with this conclusion.

## Influence

Same-sex and opposite-sex friends did not differ in the bases of power they reported using, but men and women did. The sex differences in bases of power reported by these respondents are the reverse of those used by married couples. In some marriages, wives use referent, informational, and manipulative power, whereas husbands use expertise or coercive power more (Frieze, 1979; Raven, Centers, & Rodrigues, 1975). Among these friends, women reported using coercion, expertise, and authority, whereas men used information. At the least, it appears that men and women derive power from very different sources in friendships than in marriage. In friendships, patterns of authority based on traditional sex roles appear to be reversed. Women report using more direct power bases than they do in marriage, which may indicate that they feel they have greater power in friendships. Men say they rely on information more, rather than coercion. Both sexes seem to behave differently in friendships.

The influence strategies used in these friendships also did not conform to the pattern found in romantic, heterosexual relationships. All of the commonly reported strategies were direct, rather than indirect. Women reported using stating importance (which is unilateral) and bargaining (which is bilateral) more than men did, and men reported using persuasion (which is bilateral) more than women did. Looking at both frequently and infrequently used strategies, men were somewhat more likely to use unilateral strategies, but the difference was not statistically significant. The direct nature of the strategies reported may be a product of the inherent equality in friendships, and, again the reduced effect of sex roles.

Opposite-sex and same-sex friendships differed in commonly used strategies. Opposite-sex friendships involved persuasion (bilateral) and stating importance (unilateral) whereas same-sex friendships involved bargaining (bilateral).

Also, opposite-sex friends were marginally more likely to use unilateral strategies. Thus, opposite-sex friendships do not conform to the patterns of heterosexual romantic relationships, in which women used indirect strategies (Falbo & Peplau, 1980). They are more similar to the direct strategies used by heterosexual men and homosexual men and women in romantic relationships. Therefore, the present findings lend indirect support to Falbo and Peplau's argument that heterosexual romantic relationships tend to elicit stereotypic sex roles, since these stereotypic patterns were not found among these nonromantic friendships.

### Conclusions

Males and females perceived friendships differently. Females felt more intimate with female friends than males felt with male friends. Women viewed same-sex friendships as closer than opposite-sex friendships, but men did not. These differences may be a function of women's sensitivity to features of relationships, of differing expectations about friendships, or of differential degrees of self-disclosure by men and women.

The influence strategies and power bases reported in these friendships differed from those found in research on marriage and dating, in that sex stereotypic patterns of influence were not evident. Women used more direct strategies than they do in romantic relationships with men, consistent with the suggestion by other writers that traditional sex roles are most evident in romantic, heterosexual relationships.

These findings imply a number of lines of future research. Because these involved only self-report, one line of research is to observe influence strategies enacted by actual friends. Observation may provide a more accurate measure of actual strategies used than open-ended essays do (Falbo & Snell, 1981; Huston, 1983). A second area for investigation concerns different expectations that men and women have and how those expectations impact on both romantic and nonromantic relationships. Recent work on friendship



prototypes may suggest areas in which expectations differ (Davis & Todd, 1982). Finally, since women are capable of using direct influence strategies with friends, the question arises as to why indirect strategies are used with romantic male partners, but not with nonromantic male friends. Direct comparisons between romantic relationships and friendships may explain these differences.

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